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AUTHOR Gray, Dianne Elaine
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ABSTRACT

In the field of adult education, self-esteem is a concept worthy of exploration, for it is a crucial component of much that happens in the educational setting. However, although many studies have explored self-esteem in children, little has been written about adult self-esteem. Self-esteem has been defined as a component of self and has many dimensions. It is extremely significant and penetrates into all areas of one's life. It is maintained in part by the continuities in one's life and is capable of change through the "discontinuities" inherent in the life span. All of these aspects of self-esteem are relevant for adults who wish to grow and for adult educators. Adult educators especially must be aware that (1) an appreciation of the importance and the dynamic qualities of self esteem is necessary; (2) there are many dimensions of self-esteem and numerous ways that people defend it; (3) responsibility for enhancing the self-esteem of our children, ourselves, and others needs to be claimed and appreciated as an opportunity; and (4) those involved in adult education have the specific challenge of determining how self-esteem relates to their work--the very assumptions upon which andragogy is based are related to self-esteem. (19 references.) (KC)

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SELF-ESTEEM: EXPLORING ITS DIMENSIONS AND ITS LIFE-SPAN IMPLICATIONS

by

Dianne Elaine Gray

Doctoral Student

The University of North Texas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"To an important extent it determines our selection of values, our memory processes, our perspectives and interpretations of facts, our standards of evaluation, our goals, our choice of friends, marital partners, groups, associations, and occupations" (Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982, p. 545): self-esteem. That it is indeed a significant component of "self" is readily apparent as one considers the many other variables which have been correlated to it, i.e., achievement, creativity, and motivation.

In the field of adult education, self-esteem is a concept worthy of exploration in that it is a crucial component of much that happens in the educational setting. In regard to adult participation itself, many of the leading models of motivation--Pat Cross's COR, Rubenson's Expectancy-Valence Paradigm, Boshier's Congruence Model--have at their core, the "self-esteem" of the student (or potential student). A major difficulty for adult facilitators is to discover ways of optimally challenging adults to "grow" while being careful not to unduly threaten their self-esteem (Brookfield, 1986). Moreover, that, for adults, the relationship between self-esteem/self-concept and the educational experience is not equivalent to that which it is for children has been recognized (Brundage, 1980).

As more attention is directed toward and more credence given to the developmental study of adults, and questions of continuity versus discontinuity are raised, one contemplates the relevancy of this for the concept of self-esteem: is it constant across the adult life span? If not, why? What are the implications?

This paper will explore the concept of self-esteem. It will begin with a look at definitions and origins, and will then consider various other dimensions and their significance in the life of the adult. Attention will then be directed to self-esteem and its developmental aspects across the adult life span. Finally, the implications of these findings will be examined.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature indicated that self-esteem is not unidimensional; there are various components and differing definitions. Most writers concurred, however, in the central meaning of self-esteem, and all emphasized its importance to the healthy functioning of the individual. Many correlates to self-esteem were considered and, in many cases, conflictual findings were indicated. Much has been written about self-esteem and the child; however, there is a paucity of quality materials concerning the adult. Of considerable note was the lack of articles focusing on self-esteem from the adult developmental perspective.

Definitions

Self-esteem is part of the conscious self. It includes how an individual feel about himself/herself, whether satisfied or dissatisfied (Critelli, 1987) or whether liking or disliking the self and how much (Goethals & Worchel, 1981). Coopersmith (cited in Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982) indicated that self-esteem is the evaluation which an individual makes of self and customarily maintains with regard to self. It is expressed through an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the degree to which the individual believes the self to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy.

A simple formula was devised by James (cited in Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982) which indicates that self-esteem is equal to success divided by pretensions. This was rewritten by Atchley (1983) to portray that self-esteem equals self-concept divided by ideal self. Carl Rogers (in Goethals & Worchel, 1981)

defined mental health in terms of the relationship between the ideal self-image and the actual self-image...the closer one is to what one wants to be, the greater the self-esteem. Indeed, Thomas Carlisle (cited in Goethals & Worchel, 1981) observed that happiness can be increased in value not so much by increasing one's numerator as by lessening the denominator.

Coopersmith (cited in Critelli, 1987) indicated that self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness, that it is a general personality characteristic rather than a momentary attitude or an attitude specific to a given situation.

Origin

Though the focus of this paper is upon adults, in order for one to more fully understand self-esteem, it is necessary to take a look at its origin. The self-esteem motive is universally and characteristically a dominant motive in all past and contemporary cultures and it usually is set in motion as a result of the child's initial dependence upon others for the satisfaction of basic physical needs present at birth. The development of this motive is therefore viewed as a normal outcome in the psychosocial development of the human being (Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982). That parents are so crucial to one's self-esteem is also confirmed by the following considerations: 1) Children respect their parents (this does not necessarily equate with compliance with parental wishes). 2) The influence of the parents begins at a time when the self-concept is uncrystallized and when no previous attitudes from others have been experienced. 3) Repeated communications have much more of an effect than those that are infrequently encountered (Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982).

Rosenberg found parental interest in the child and closeness to the father to be positively related to self-esteem, while Sears discovered that

children of mothers and fathers described as "warm" had higher self-esteems (Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982). In Coopersmith's studies (in Pervin, 1984) there were three areas that were deemed particularly significant in the fostering of self-esteem: acceptance of and interest in the child, genuine feelings of affection and warmth, and the form of reward and punishment. In regard to the latter, it was discovered that punishment was required no less in those families having children with high self-esteem, but that it was different in its expression and was perceived as justifiable. It was aimed at managing the undesired behavior rather than at withholding love; moreover, it was not harsh, but firm and consistent.

The Value of High Self-Esteem

It is generally accepted that high self-esteem is better than low, but what are some of the reasons? Murstein (in Stevens-Long, 1979) contended that self-esteem is a negotiable asset in the social world. Those with higher degrees of self-esteem usually are considered more desirable as potential spouses than those with little sense of self-worth. People with high self-esteem are more likely to find desirable mates.

Those manifesting high self-esteem have more congruent communication styles in that they feel freer to explore the world and to let others know who they are. What they are doing, thinking, feeling, saying all go together (Critelli, 1987). Individuals with higher self-esteem are more likely to try higher level positions, to participate in a wider variety and greater complexity of learning experiences and learning content (Brundage & Mackeracher, 1980). Rosenberg and Kaplan (1982) attributed to self-esteem the power to influence the selection of values, memory processes, interpretations

of facts, standards of evaluation, goals, choice of friends, groups, asociations, etc.; they claimed that as a pervasive influence, there are few factors that can match self-esteem.

The writer of this article believes that high self-esteem enables persons to more readily reach out to life with open arms, ready to embrace, rather than to ward against it with arms folded in front, seeking to protect. One seems more able to appreciate the symphonic harmony of life in its whole rather than concentrating simply on short measures of melody.

Satir (in Critelli, 1987) reflected that the cost of low self-esteem is exorbitant...losing contact with one's own thoughts and feelings...viewing spontaneous interaction as a possible threat. Low self-esteem also clouds the ability to listen. Constructive comments may be taken as put-downs and immediately denied, thus limiting possibilities for growth. Maslow (in Critelli, 1987) maintained that so long as self-esteem needs were not met, one could not adequately attend to the challenge of meeting higher level needs. Critelli (1987) wrote that individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to depression and to psychosomatic symptoms; they are more shy, less secure, more easily hurt by criticism, less active in extracurricular affairs, and less likely to show leadership abilities. Ziller (in Wells & Marwell, 1976) adds another dimension when he observes that the person with low self-esteem is field dependent, passively conforming to the influence of the prevailing field or context.

The question is sometimes raised: Is it possible to have too much self-esteem? Should not one guard against self conceit? Critelli (1987) warned that sometimes individuals who appear to have a real high degree of self-esteem actually don't feel good about themselves and are simply trying to

cover up through a superior air. It is therefore misleading to equate conceit with high self-esteem. Rosenberg and Kaplan (1982) address this issue when they reflect that high self-esteem means that an individual respects himself/herself, and that while he/she considers the self worthy, this does not mean better than others (though definitely, not worse, either). Individuals with high self-esteem realize that they are not the ultimate in perfection, but recognize their limitations and expect to grow.

Strategies for Enhancing/Maintaining Self-Esteem

Is it possible to change self-esteem? If so, what approaches might be used? It is obvious that nothing can be done to change the past; it is already a finished "chapter." One, however, does not need to passively continue on perpetrating those patterns that were set into motion in childhood. The one immediately constructive measure to take is that of challenging the negative self-talk that may have been set into motion through early interactions with parents and other "significant others." In regard to parents, it is generally a good idea to acknowledge that they probably did the best that they could under the circumstances and not to continue in the "victim" mode, but to claim the power and ability to change (Critelli, 1987).

Before taking a look at possible steps that can be taken to enhance (or to maintain) self-esteem, it might be beneficial to examine the various determinants which influence one's judgment of self.

Reflected Appraisal

Probably the most powerful influence of one's overall estimate of self is the assessment or evaluation of others. This is why feedback from parents

during the early years is so crucial. Assessments from those who are most significant in one's life are certainly the most influential.

Comparison

A second highly important area is that of comparisons. Festinger (in Goethals & Worchel, 1981) indicated that in addition to passively accepting other people's appraisals, individuals also form opinions of selves by making social comparisons. These comparisons are usually made with others who should be similar in regard to the attribute in question. Pettigrew (in Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982) elaborated upon the various types of reference points. An individual can compare the present self to the former self (or to the projected self). Insofar as social comparisons, individuals can compare themselves to persons in the same social category (or different), or to remote reference groups. Furthermore, comparisons can be made that are situational or that are general.

Attribution Processes

Another area which can influence one's self-esteem is that of the attributions or inferences which individuals make about their attitudes, emotions, abilities and motives from their behavior. Sometimes attitudes, for example, are known quite well and are used to guide behaviors; other times, however, it is the behavior, which when assessed, reveals the attitude (Goethals & Worchel, 1981).

Identification

People sometimes adopt an entire pattern of behavior in an effort to be like someone they admire. Role models and one's approximation to their desired traits can therefore have a bearing on one's self esteem. Although

this is often more common with children and youth, it sometimes is true for adults, as well (Goethals & Worchel, 1981).

What strategies can/does one employ, either consciously or unconsciously to enhance/maintain the self-esteem (Hamachek, 1972)? Projection and rationalization are two protective mechanisms that are often used. Compensation is another, and there are several forms. If direct action is taken, the individual persistently attacks the source of an actual inferiority and attempts to remove it. When the original weakness is not only removed but converted into a source of strength, it is thought of as over-compensation. With substitute compensation, a person does not remove the shortcoming, but develops other satisfactions. Although compensatory behavior can be an effective means for enhancing self esteem, there are two types: constructive and destructive. An example of the constructive mode would include working hard to develop present skills instead of fretting over things one cannot do well; an example of the destructive type is an individual's selecting an occupation without regard to personal fitness and limitations.

To know that someone considers himself/herself inferior with respect to a particular quality is not sufficient to determine his/her self-esteem; it is necessary to know how much that particular aspect of self is valued in relationsip to other aspects. For instance, good looks, intelligence, thoughtfulness, creativeness may all be given different priorities. On the whole, an individual is prone to value those characteristics in which there is perceived strength and to devalue the others. The discriminating person will evaluate an issue in terms of degree rather than "either-or" absolutes and will recognize that some values, from the personal perspective, are more significant than others. The selective interpretation of "facts" is another

area worthy of mention. Whenever there is sufficient lack of clarity or specificity concerning what a "fact" or a "set of facts" mean, there is always the possibility of a person's salvaging the self-esteem. There are many criteria, for instance, by which one might be judged a sociable person: being the first to speak in a group, having many friends, have a few intimate friends, etc. This leaves a great deal of latitude for selective interpretation.

Another dimension upon which self-esteem hinges involves the standards which one sets for the self. It is not simply how good a person thinks he/she is in regard to some quality, but how good he/she would like to be that counts. People have a tremendous amount of freedom in choosing these standards. One can aspire to the pinnacle of perfection or one can be satisfied with a very modest degree of success. On the whole, research indicates that people tend to set goals that they interpret as falling within their range of potentialities.

Another significant aspect of self-esteem is the social comparison element. One of the most consistent findings in mass communications research is that people tend to relate to others with whom they agree. They will associate with those who think well of them and avoid those who dislike them; in this sense friendship has been called a "mutual admiration unit." (Hamachek, 1971, p. 244) It is a crucial element in self-esteem. From the growth standpoint, however, the friendship that does allow for the mutual challenges of ideas, etc., can foster each "participant" to re-evaluate and to "mature" into new levels of understanding. An additional factor over which the individual has control is the environment--situational selectivity. This entails occupational choice, activity selection, etc.

Of course, with all of these choices, there is an optimum balance. Getting a good grade when there is little chance of obtaining a low one contributes little to one's sense of self-esteem; likewise, getting a 98% in a test in which one was determined to get 100% can deflate the self-esteem. The significant point is that one does and can exert a great deal of control over the self-esteem, even given such facts as genetic endowments and early childhood experiences. For those with significant problems with self-esteem, counseling has been found to be extremely helpful in many cases, through enabling the client to feel the approval of an other (others), validation, and affirmation.

Self-Esteem from the Developmental Perspective

Very little has been written concerning self-esteem and its variations or consistencies through the stages of adult life. One would, through an examination of Santrock (1985, p. 14), however, feel inclined to embrace both the continuous and the discontinuous potentials of self-esteem. According to Bee and Mitchell (in Santrock, 1985, p. 14), one would assume that self-esteem could change throughout life as a result of the following factors: 1) Changes in broad expectations at different historical eras. 2) Changes in specific life experiences of the individual. 3) Regular changes in life tasks at different ages, consisting of different demands. 4) Biological changes, such as hormone changes, that affect both behavior and attitudes. 5) Hierarchical development. In contrast, there could be, conceivably, much stability in self-esteem through the adult life span because of the following: 1) biological processes, 2) the continuing influence of early childhood experiences, and 3) early childhood experiences plus consistent adult experiences.

Perhaps taking a quick look at a few of these, and then a more extended look at "the regular changes in life tasks at different ages" will reinforce the truth of both positions: self-esteem is both discontinuous and continuous.

In their review of male-female differences in self-esteem, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) found little variation insofar as generalized differences. Some studies did show a slight tendency for women to score lower on self-esteem, but the researchers cautioned that there is a tendency for women to be less defensive and more willling to disclose weaknesses than are men. Aside from generalized self-esteem, there was evidence indicating that women have lower levels of self-confidence than men. Compared with men, they showed a tendency to underestimte their abilities, to undervalue their completed work, and to have lower expectations for success (perhaps the lower expectation for success was instrumental in yielding higher self-esteem scores than might be expected (in reference to self-esteem equation previously cited in this paper). In a study done by Puglisi and Jackson (1980), it was indicated that while androgynous individuals displayed the highest levels of self-esteem, masculinity was a far better predictor of self-esteem than was femininity. The issue of self-esteem is certainly in a state of flux with the women's movement, which undoubtedly will have a profound effect on its dimensions at varying points in life. Along a completely different vein, the whole economic situation in Texas, with many individuals losing jobs and homes and prestige, is another historical event that is sure to impact upon self-esteem.

Changes in life experiences/relationships, such as a divorce, can render both the male and female with a sense of lower self-esteem (Stevens-Long,

1979). Other experiences, of course, could have a positive impact. Biological changes, too, whether natural or disease-related (such as abnormal hormonal deficiencies) can prompt changes in bodily appearance that can affect self-esteem. On the positive side, many adults have had significant improvements in self-esteem levels through therapy--an example of hierarchical development--as indicated in Santrock (1985).

There are, therefore, many examples conveying the flexibility and changing nature of self-esteem. At the same time, one can readily concur with Santrock (1985) that the genetic endowment of an adult, his/her early childhood experiences (especially in light of the previous discussion of this factor in this paper), and consistent adult experiences would all, to some degree, promote some consistency in one's sense of self-esteem through life.

Of particular interest for the purposes of this paper is the way in which the changes in developmental tasks as one moves through the early adult years, middle years, and the elderly years affects self-esteem. Katz and Zigler (Newmand & Newman, 1984) examined self-esteem by having people of varying ages compare their current abilities with what they considered their ideal abilities. This technique revealed that self-esteem fluctuates from one developmental stage to another, rather than remaining a stable aspect of personality.

Young Adult Years According to developmentalists such as Havighurst, the young adult years are ones of trying out new roles--such as worker, spouse, parent. They are often characterized by one's beginning to take on community responsibilities and finding congenial social groups. Sheehy refers to it as the time when one tries to master what he/she feels should be done. Gould earmarks this stage as "taking responsibility for one's own life (in Santrock,

1985). Whatever specific tasks it holds, it is a time of change and of assumption of many new responsibilities. In regard to the equation self-esteem equals "actual self" over "ideal self", one would expect this to be a period of question marks concerning exactly what one is capable of accomplishing...a time when idealism has not quite merged with the realities of life. One would expect that the self-esteem, generally speaking, might be lower during this period of life. Breger (in Goldhaber, 1986), spoke of adolescence and the early adult years as a time of inconsistencies, of finding it difficult to deal more and more with the fact that the ideal self and the real self are so different. The late adolescent and young adult are described by Kennedy (1978) as feeling insecure. Of the many studies cited in the article by Erdwins, Mellinger, and Tyer (1981)--an article which explores the variations of self-concept and self-esteem of women across the life-span--none indicates that young women, as a whole, have higher levels of self-esteem than do middle-aged or older women. Concerning this stage of life, Atchley (1983) observed that the process of assuming new roles, finding role models, dropping roles, and transforming roles in a wide variety of settings--jobs, family, community--is so prevalent in early adulthood that it is often difficult to develop a firm sense of self. This would of course be reflected in feelings about the self.

Middle Adult Years During the middle years, Havighurst indicated that adults increase civic and social responsibilities and leisure activities. There are also the adjustments to children (if there are any) becoming adults and to aging parents, as well to physical changes. Bloom labels it as the time of "consolidation of career," and the empty nest syndrome, while Erikson

ascribes to it the issue of generativity versus self-absorption. According to Bloom, it is the time of peak earnings (in Santrock, 1985).

Studies of self-esteem during these middle years vary. In a recent investigation by Jaquish & Ripple (1981) in which self-esteem was assessed in 213 adults between the ages of eighteen and eighty-four, it was found that the middle-aged adults--forty to sixty--scored highest in self-esteem; these scores correlated with high measures of creativity for this age. Puglisi and Jackson (1980) likewise found in a study of participants ranging in age from 17 to 89, that the highest levels of self-esteem for both men and women occurred during the mid-life decades. In studies concentrating just on women, there were some interesting, yet expected findings. According to Bart (in Erdwins, Mellinger & Tyer, 1981), women manifest poorer self-images and a loss of self-esteem during the mid-life decades of the forties and fifties. Women who had focused their lives exclusively around childrearing were more likely to become depressed when the children left home; Powell (in Erdwins, Mellinger & Tyer, 1981) also found that homemakers, during the empty-nest years,had significantly greater numbers of emotional symptoms, and Birnbaum, cited in the same source, found that homemakers compared to career women had significantly fewer positive feelings about themselves. Neugarten, however, reported that mid-life was a time when women expressed feelings of increased self-confidence and were optimistic about having greater freedom to develop their capabilities. Insofar as men are concerned, studies yield mixed results, too. There seems to be a wide variation, depending upon the sample and method. Generally speaking, men in middle ages have a higher self-esteem than do their younger counterparts. Although there are those who are going through the trauma of "losing jobs", etc., and all of the other mid-life

crises described by individuals such as Gould and Sheehy, (in Santrock, 1985), for the most part, these men are fairly well settled and resigned to their station in life.

Older Adult Years What are the effects of longevity on self-esteem? According to Bengtson, Reedy and Gordon (in Birren & Schaie, 1985), most of the studies reviewed in their research show--for all of their different measurement instruments--that the self-esteem of middle-aged or older persons is equal to or greater than that of the younger subjects. One possible explanation is that of cohort differences, that the elderly throughout their lives had a higher level of self-esteem. Another explanation is maturational in its thrust in that it suggests ontogenetic change, that individuals are able to maintain/increase their level of self-esteem throughout life despite the losses accompanying aging. A third possible reason could be that of survivorship. The people with the higher self-esteem have greater longevity.

In the writer of this paper's own research into aging, it was a common finding that the elderly compare themselves to each other--to those who have already died, to those, who, for the most part, are worse off than they, and they usually come out looking/feeling fairly good about themselves. As also noted in Atchley (1983), most older persons take pride in that they have outlived many of their friends, and this then becomes a source of their self-esteem. Bengtson, Reddy, and Gordon (in Birren & Schaie, 1985), also suggest that the determinants of age-identification and self-esteem may be different in old age than at the other life stages. They also noted sex differences in that education and income were found to be more important to male self-esteem, and age-related deprivation and current activity were more

crucial to female self-esteem. Kalish (in Atchley, 1983) observed that if older people have a reasonably stable recent history, an anticipated standard of living, and had no childhood fears of being left alone, their self-esteem rises with age.

Declining independence and poor health do, of course, threaten the self-concept and self-esteem of the elderly. For the very old, or those in bad health with significantly diminished independence, the past is tenaciously held onto as a means of sustaining an image of themselves as worthwhile. Selective interaction and perception, as referred to earlier in this paper, are used judiciously here to enable the maintainance of self-esteem. When an individual enters a home or institution, or is bedridden, he or she loses the control of selective interaction--he/she cannot surround the self with those friends that helped maintain a positive sense of self--an identity based on past accomplishments and shared experiences is badly shaken. At this stage the self-esteem can be gravely impaired (Atchley, 1983).

This review of the literature indicates that there are many variables enhancing the stability of self-esteem and that there are also many influences at work to alter it. Both strands exist side by side. Also, while approaching self-esteem from the individual perspective, one can discern individual propensities toward high or low self-esteem throughout the life span; one can also see from the developmental perpective, that there are "trends" and unique influences for the various age groupings.

Chapter 3

IMPLICATIONS

What does all of this mean? That self-esteem is a component of self that has many dimensions, that it is extremely significant and penetrates into all areas of one's life, that it is maintained in part by the continuities in one's life and is capable of change through the "discontinuities" inherent in the life span: all of these observations are relevant for the individual who seeks to know and understand the self and to optimally "grow" and experience self and life; and for all those who would seek to have meaningful, enhancing relationships with others; and for all individuals who are or would aspire to be engaged in adult education, in its varying forms.

1) An appreciation of the importance and the dynamic qualities of self-esteem is necessary. High self-esteem is crucial, as has been pointed out in this article, but it can never be assumed. There are myriads of factors influencing it, and just because an adult is an adult and almost all of the self-esteem literature has been beamed at childhood, this does not mean that adults have high self-esteem just by virtue of their social and legal "label." Moreover, the degree of self-esteem that they do have, cannot be considered as a firm, stablized "given" for the rest of their days.

2) One needs to be aware of the many dimensions of self-esteem and the numerous ways people have of defending it--some of them necessary and constructive and others pathological and destructive. An unawareness here can drastically affect one's self-knowledge and sense of wholeness and harmony; it can also significantly affect the meaning and depth and clarity of relationships with others. Communication between family members, friends, and

teacher and students is badly impaired if it lacks genuineness and spontaneity, and is too laced with "cover-up" talk.

3) Respnsibility for enhancing the self-esteem of our children, ourselves, and others needs to be claimed and appreciated as an opportunity. Research has pointed out the key role that parents play in the subsequent self-esteem functioning of their children. They need to take all possible measures to be nurturing facilitators of its evolution, keeping in mind the research about effective parenting and doing their best to be warm, caring, interested, consistent, firm but understanding parents.

Relationships with the elderly--friends, parents--must take into consideration the fact that they use the past as a way of enhancing their present...their self-worth...their self-concept. Their talk about younger years is not idle-talk; it is serving an important function and needs to be appreciated as such. More could be done with photograph albums and special keepsakes from the past, and with encouraging recorded histories. How truly traumatic the "giving up" of one's possessions must be when about to enter a nursing home or similar situation. Keeping in touch with one's circle of elderly loved ones is crucial in providing them with precious linkages to the past.

For those adults with low personal self-esteem, there needs to be an "ok-ness" about liking the self enough to want <u>for</u> the self a sense of high self-esteem, and then working toward it. An awareness of one's self-talk, and one's social comparisons, and one's "ideal" self is the beginning, as well as the overall acknowledgement that self-esteem can and does change; it is not genetically- nor parent- imposed in fossil-like style, but does have some flexibility and plasticity. If the self-esteem is badly impaired, adults

need to recognize the potential which quality therapy offers.

4) Those involved in adult education have the specific challenge of determining how self-esteem relates to their work. The very assumptions upon which andragogy is based are related to self-esteem. If a teacher is aware of (or makes herself/himself aware of) the self-esteem levels of those in the class--and a knowledge of the various strategies for maintaining self-esteem which were listed under the review of the literature would certainly help here--this will influence the methodology and activities chosen, and the degree of self-direction expected in the classroom as a whole; it will also guide her/him in the degree and type of support that is offered to individual students. The teacher also needs to be aware of her/his own level of self-esteem in the choosing of primary teaching styles.

There are many other implications which the reader can infer from this paper, but the writer would emphasize primarily those dealing with an awareness of and a sense of responsibility for enhancing the lives of others and self. Of course, above all, the implication is made that there is much to understand and to know concerning self-esteem. Its importance should never be overlooked and one should be dogmatic in refraining from making any simplistic judgments concerning it. Given the many situational variables that can influence it and the fact that it is subject to influence by the developmental stages, one can readily recognize and accept its complexity.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

Self-esteem has various dimensions and is affected by numerous variables. It is a deeply significant aspect of the self. There is that facet of self-esteem that seeks to provide a continuing link throughout the life span; and there is that aspect that is discontinuous in nature in that it is open to change through the adult stages of life and through specific situations and through changed ways in looking at oneself. To be cognizant of the concept of self-esteem and all of its implications is a responsibility of every adult--from both the personal and altruistic perspectives. Self-esteem is pervasive in its influence.

"To an important extent it determines our selection of values, our memory processes, our perspectives and interpretations of facts, our standards of evaluation, our goals, our choice of friends, marital partners, groups, associations, and occupations" (Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982, p. 545): self esteem!

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